

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for

No Talking

by

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Book Information

Andrew Clements, No Talking
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The noisy fifth-grade boys of Laketon Elementary School challenge the equally loud fifth-grade girls to a "no talking" contest.

Award: Parenting Magazine Award; SLJ Best Book

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Main Characters

Dave Packer a fifth-grade boy who proposed a no-talking challenge between the boys and the girls

Ellen a fifth grader at Laketon Elementary School

Eric a fifth grader at Laketon Elementary School

Kyle a fifth grader at Laketon Elementary School

Lynsey Burgess the leader of the fifth-grade girls, who accepted Dave's challenge

Mr. Burton fifth-grade reading and language arts teacher at Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Abigail Hiatt the principal of Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Akers the music teacher at Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Burgess Lynsey's mom

Mrs. Escobar the fifth-grade math teacher at Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Henley the fifth-grade gym teacher at Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Marlow the fifth-grade science teacher at Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Overby the fifth-grade social studies teacher at Laketon Elementary School

Mrs. Packer Dave's mom

Rachel Morgan a fifth grader at Laketon Elementary School

Vocabulary

communication the exchange of thoughts, ideas, or facts; the act of presenting ideas or thoughts so that they are clearly understood; the sharing of thoughts and feelings

creative imaginative; original; artistic; inventive; fresh, unusual, or new; having a good or productive imagination; having the ability to think of new ideas

custodian a person responsible for the care and maintenance of a building; a janitor

hesitation reluctance; pauses; delayed action; doubtful waiting; uncertainty

honestly truthfully; without cheating or deceit

illegal unlawful; against the law; not allowed or permitted; prohibited by official regulations; against the rules; forbidden; acting in a prohibited or unlawful manner

immature tending to act childish or younger than one's age

logical sensible; following a consistent or reasonable order; making sense; intelligent; smart or wise

orderly organized; neat or neatly arranged; neither sloppy nor messy; controlled or easy to manage; peaceful; obedient; logical; not wild

recruits new members of a military or other group; those who have been invited to join

Synopsis

The teachers at Laketon Elementary School call Dave Packer's fifth-grade class "The Unshushables" because of their penchant for talking. The class is also unusually immature with regard to boys and girls getting along.

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Dave reads about Mahatma Gandhi for social studies class and learns that Gandhi spent one day a week not speaking so he could bring order to his mind. Dave, who loves to talk, finds this intriguing and decides to try to keep quiet for a whole day. At lunch, however, Dave is unable to keep silent. He lobs an insult at Lynsey Burgess, who is also a loudmouth and the leader of the girls in his class. This leads to a bet between the boys and the girls, and the "no talking" contest rules are set. The boys and girls will attempt to say as few words as possible for two days. At school, they may answer adults with a three-word response, but no talking is allowed at home before or after school. They agree to operate under the honor system with Dave and Lynsey keeping score. The team that speaks the fewest words wins.

The staff at Laketon Elementary has mixed reactions to the contest. Several teachers welcome the quiet, but Mrs. Hiatt, the principal, feels as if she is losing control. This leads to a confrontation between Dave and Mrs. Hiatt. They resolve their differences after Dave invites Mrs. Hiatt to join the contest.

At the end of the contest, the girls are ahead as a result of the words Dave spoke in his confrontation with Mrs. Hiatt. Lynsey, however, gives a speech with exactly the right number of words to make the contest end in a tie.

Although the contest has many humorous and unintended consequences, the boys and girls learn valuable lessons about themselves and the adults in their lives. They also learn the power of words, both spoken and unspoken.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Inferential Comprehension

If this story were to continue, how do you think the fifth-grade class would be different?

Answers will vary but will probably mention that the boys and girls would get along better. The students would probably think more before they speak. Their reputation as "The Unshushables" would change.

Constructing Meaning

The fifth graders learn many lessons throughout the contest. Name some of the lessons they learned, giving examples from the story to support your answer.

They learned to compromise. Lynsey and Dave compromised concerning the rules of the contest and at the assembly when Lynsey, Dave, and the others said the Pledge of Allegiance. They agreed to give in to avoid a bigger conflict. Lynsey and Dave learned to respect each other. Dave gave Lynsey credit for asking about contractions, and Lynsey was impressed with his answer. The class learned a lesson in peaceful civil disobedience when Mrs. Hiatt forbade them to continue the contest. They chose to continue while still trying to respect the school rules. They learned to speak more concisely in their classes when they gave three-word answers to their teachers' questions.

Teachable Skills

Recognizing Plot

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning

Making Inferences

Recognizing Cause and Effect